



Parshas Vayishlach 2018, the power to endure

Our Parsha begins with Ya'akov Avinu returning home to Canaan after over twenty years of absence. Still fearful of Esav, Ya'akov sent messengers a message of reconciliation to him. However, they returned with a grim report; Esav was preparing to *"greet him"* with 400 men.

In response, Ya'akov sent him an extravagant gift of hundreds of cattle, donkeys, and camels. He split his family into two camps so that if one was attacked, the other could escape, and then he turned to G-d to pray.

The night before he met Esav, he moved his family and belongings across the Yabok River. After everyone had crossed except for him, Ya'akov met an angel; they wrestled and fought until dawn, when the angel wanted to go. But Ya'akov refused to let him go until he blessed him, so the angel gave Ya'akov a new name, Yisrael, the prince of G-d. After 20 years apart, Ya'akov and Esav finally meet once again. Ya'akov bowed seven times, then embraced Esav as they cried together. Esav asked Ya'akov, *"who are all these people with you?"* He replied, *"these are the children whom G-d has gifted your servant."*

Esav then asked, what were all the herds of cattle I saw before we met? Ya'akov answered they were all gifts for you. Esav responded I don't need them; I have more than enough! But Ya'akov pleaded with him, and Esav eventually accepted the gifts.

However, a question comes to mind: We are called Bnei Yisroel, the children of Israel, after Yaakov Avinu, **but why Yaakov?** This is the question we find ourselves repeatedly asking as we read the narratives of Bereishis. Yaakov was not Noach, righteous, perfect in his generation. He was not Avraham, who left his land and home in response to a Divine call.

He was unlike Yitzchak, who willingly went to be offered up as a sacrifice. Nor did he have the burning sense of justice and willingness to intervene that we see in the vignettes of Moshe's early life. Yet we are defined for eternity as the descendants of Yaakov, the children of Israel. Hence the question: **Why are we called the children of Yisrael?**

The answer is that it is our honor to be called the children of Israel. Because the name Yisrael is given to a person who overcame adversity, who triumphs over bad, over evil. Ya'akov was a person who fought and succeeded in the most impossible situations.

From being unaffected and remaining connected to G-d at his father-in-law's house to meeting his brother. Yaakov continued to achieve and succeed against all odds and expectations. It is our honor to be called Bnei Yisroel, children of Yisrael. Because through the name Yisrael, we receive the capacity to achieve and succeed against all likelihoods. To triumph over evil. To survive the impossible. To endure and withstand any situation and to emerge victoriously and prosperously.

The ability to fight, win, and succeed is given to us by the name Yisrael. Throughout history, we were marked down for total annihilation, complete destruction, and utter elimination. Our story recounts and details the misery, countless tragedies, and misfortunes that plague our ancestors. But the name Yisrael allows us to continue to thrive and accomplish against all expectations.

In our daily life, we must realize that we can endure. We can conquer any demons given to us; we can overcome any obstacle placed before us. The question is: are we willing to fight? Fight and give 100 percent of ourselves to succeed and accomplish our goal.

Because across the finish line are blessings, success, happiness, and purpose. Like Yaakov Avinu, we must fight our angels and make them bless us with a new name, a unique energy, and a singular destination.

“Yesterday is not ours to recover. But tomorrow is ours to win or to lose.”

-Lyndon B. Johnson

Have an inspirational Shabbos!
Rabbi Sholom Yemini